How Prayer Overcame the Fetishes

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THE old Bayaka chief, Lekani, had been very anxious that we should build in his district. He was ruthlessly murdered, however, by irresponsible young rascals in one of his own towns because he decided for their opponents in a palaver. His people have always been very friendly to us on our frequent visits, and some of them have often asked for a teacher to come and live among them; but others, more superstitious, were afraid to have us settle permanently among them, lest there be truth in the old belief that the white man is in partnership with the devil. Therefore, when we accepted the invitation of some of the younger men to place an evangelist in their towns, the older ones always had an excuse for delay.

After several unsuccessful attempts we decided to make a determined effort to locate there an earnest young fellow who had recently come to Cuillo from the lower Congo. At this season no grass can be found for building, so he agreed to live in an old tent. However, the heavy

rains and intense heat made that impossible for any length of time, and we went to visit him and arrange something better. Upon our arrival we found much secret opposition while all was very friendly on the surface. That night, as the village slowly sank into silence, the stentorian voice of the chief boomed out, warning all to remain within doors during the night, as he wished to have no " eating of strange flesh " in his town. We began to expect trouble. Before daylight we were awakened by his great voice calling his fetishes one after another to awake and protect his life from the evil one. Soon after, he with others came to the tent and charged my carriers with having been out during the night practising witchcraft. The charge was refuted, and in turn the chief and his followers were charged with wilfully making false accusation. Then the men who had previously agreed for a consideration to carry a small grass hut from a deserted village four miles distant, took their guns and stole off one by one to the woods, and when they were sought they could not be found. Thereupon the evangelist and I, with the two men and two boys who went from here with me, sought out the deserted village, tore the house

down and proceeded to carry the walls on our heads over the four miles, through woods, over hills and across streams.

While resting that night by the camp fire, a voice from out of the dark warned us that if the house were set up, the people would leave and live in the woods, as they had been doing for fear of *Bula Matadi* (the government officers). To persist in the face of such opposition would only increase fear and suspicion, while to abandon the project when it was widely known that we had gone there to settle would mean that doors then open to us would be closed. Failure stared us in the face. We had done our utmost. But our extremity was God's opportunity. We cast the whole thing upon the Lord and woke several times during the night to remind him that the fight was altogether his. Imagine our joy when the chief came at daybreak to ask for the cloth to pay the men to carry the remaining parts of the house. The opposition had disappeared. Prayer had won the victory.

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